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CLAIMS

1) A drive assembly (8; 52) for driving a rotary member (10), in particular the shaft of a pump (7) of a combustion engine (1); the assembly (8; 52) being characterized by comprising a movable supporting member (15); a drive wheel (16) fitted idly to said movable supporting member (15); elastic means (30) for moving said movable supporting member (15), so that said drive wheel (16) angularly engages said rotary member (10) and a drive member (5), powered by said combustion engine (1), to drive the rotary member (10); and actuating means (22, 47; 58, 81) which can be activated to exert a force in opposition to that exerted by said elastic means (30), 10 to detach said drive wheel (16) from at least one of said rotary member (10) and said drive member (5).

2) An assembly as claimed in Claim 1, characterized in that said elastic means (30) exert a force, to push said drive wheel (16) against said rotary member (10) and said drive member (5), which is greater than the travel resistance of said actuating means (22, 47; 58, 81) when maintained in a disabled rest condition.

3) An assembly as claimed in Claim 1 or 2, characterized in that said actuating means (22, 47; 58, 81) comprise an actuator (47; 81) independent of said combustion engine (1).

4) An assembly as claimed in Claim 3, characterized in that said actuating means (22, 47; 58, 81) also

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comprise a mechanical drive (22; 58) interposed between said actuator (47; 81) and said movable supporting member (15).

5) An assembly as claimed in Claim 4, characterized in that said movable supporting member (15) comprises a connecting portion (20), opposite that supporting said drive wheel (16), connected to said mechanical drive (22; 58) to move along a circular trajectory.

6) An assembly as claimed in Claim 5, characterized 10 in that said actuator (81) is a rotary actuator; and in that said mechanical drive (58) comprises a gear drive (78) interposed between the rotary actuator (81) and said movable supporting member (15).

7) An assembly as claimed in Claim 5 or 6, 15 characterized in that said mechanical drive comprises cam actuating means (22; 59).

8) An assembly as claimed in Claim 7, characterized in that said cam actuating means (59) are interposed between said gear drive (78) and said connecting portion 20 (20).

9) An assembly as claimed in Claim 8, characterized in that said connecting portion (20) is a hollow tubular portion having an axis of symmetry (23) parallel to the axis of rotation (19) of said drive wheel (16); and in 25 that said cam actuating means (59) comprise a hinge pin (60) engaging said hollow tubular portion in rotary manner about said axis of symmetry (23), and hinged to a fixed frame (53) to rotate about a hinge axis (66)

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parallel to and eccentric with respect to the axis of symmetry (23); said actuating means (58, 81) rotating said hinge pin (60) about said hinge axis (66).

10) An assembly as claimed in Claim 9,
5 characterized in that said elastic means comprise a torsion spring (30) housed in the tubular said connecting portion (20), and having one end fixed angularly to said hinge pin (60), and the opposite end fixed angularly to the tubular said connecting portion (20).

10 11) An assembly as claimed in Claim 10,
characterized in that the tubular said connecting portion (20) defines an annular chamber (29) coaxial with said axis of symmetry (23); said torsion spring (30) being a wire spring housed in said annular chamber (29) and
15 coaxial with said axis of symmetry (23).

12) An assembly as claimed in Claim 10 or 11,
characterized in that said hinge pin (60) is fitted integrally with a radial toothed portion (76) of said gear drive (78).

20 13) An assembly as claimed in Claim 12,
characterized in that said hinge pin (60) terminates at one end with a radial appendix (74) having a curved slot (75) with its center of curvature coincident with said hinge axis (66); said toothed portion (76) facing inwards
25 of said slot (75) and meshing with a pinion (77) movable inside the slot (75).

14) An assembly as claimed in Claim 12 or 13,
characterized in that said rotary actuator (81) is housed

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in a cavity defined by said frame (53), and has an output shaft parallel to the hinge axis (66).

15) An assembly as claimed in any one of Claims 9 to 14, characterized in that said frame (53) is connected integrally to a fixed body (50) by a single through screw (70) extending coaxially with said hinge axis (66).

16) An assembly as claimed in Claim 15, characterized in that said frame (53) has a recess (56) bounded by a cylindrical end surface (57) coaxial with said axis of symmetry (23); said connecting portion (20) being housed removably in said recess (56); and said hinge pin (60) being connected in rotary manner to a hinge pin (67) coaxial with the hinge axis (66) and integral with a supporting plate (55) of said frame (53).

15 17) An assembly as claimed in one of Claims 3 to 5, characterized in that said actuator is a linear actuator (47); and lever drive means (22) are interposed between the linear actuator (47) and said movable supporting member (15).

20 18) An assembly as claimed in Claim 17, characterized in that said drive means comprise a rocker arm lever (22).

19) An assembly as claimed in Claim 18, characterized in that said movable supporting member (15) 25 comprises a connecting portion (20) hinged directly to a portion (21) of said rocker arm lever (22) to rotate about an axis (23) parallel to the axis of rotation (19) of said drive wheel (16), and defining an annular chamber

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(29) housing said elastic means (30).

20) An assembly as claimed in Claim 19, characterized in that said rocker arm lever (22) has first retaining means (38, 49) for engaging second 5 retaining means (36) carried by said connecting portion (20) to keep the drive wheel (16) detached from both said rotary member (10) and said drive member (5).

21) An assembly as claimed in any one of the foregoing Claims, characterized in that said drive member 10 is a flexible belt (5); said drive wheel (16) cooperating with the back of said belt (5).

22) An assembly as claimed in any one of the foregoing Claims, characterized in that said movable supporting member comprises two contoured portions (15a) 15 of the same shape and size.

23) An assembly as claimed in Claim 22, characterized in that said contoured portions (15a) extend on opposite sides of a central plane of symmetry (P) of the drive wheel (16), which plane is perpendicular 20 to the axis of rotation of said drive wheel.

24) An assembly as claimed in Claim 22 or 23, characterized in that said contoured portions (15a) are made of molded plastic material.

25) An assembly as claimed in Claim 23 or 24, characterized in that said contoured portions contact, and are connected integrally to, each other.

26) An assembly as claimed in one of Claims 22 to 25, characterized in that the contoured portions define

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at least one end fork having respective arms (15b); each arm having a respective integral cylindrical projection (15c) forming part of a hinge pin coaxial with a relative axis (A), and to which the drive wheel (16) is mounted to
5 rotate about the relative axis (A).